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ABSTRACT

The case study describes a program for learning disabled and neurologically impaired high schoolers. A historical review notes the school's community and the evaluation of the mainstreaming program. Administrative details are briefly summarized, as are the unique characteristics of the teacher and aide in the resource room program that serves 12 students. Excerpts from student interviews are presented, and the curriculum focusing on basic skills is described. Also described is the vocational component which provides field trips to community work sites. Additional aspects of the case study include summaries from interviews with school faculty, both those who support the mainstreaming program and those who do not. Difficulties involved in definitions of learning disabilities, administrative responsibility, and in making disabled students fit into a very achievement-oriented program are cited. (CL)

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"WALK ACROSS THAT STAGE": A Case Study of a Program For Neurologically Impaired and Learning Disabled Students at Hutton High

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Introduction

"Efficacy Studies" is a research tradition which attempts to see the effectiveness of particular treatments on clients. For decades, scholars have conducted research on the efficacy of special class placement for disabled children (the physically and mentally handicapped) as opposed to regular class assignments (integrated with typical peers) (MacMillian, 1977; Blatt, B. and Garfunkel, F., 1973). These studies have been inconclusive. In attempting to explain the contradictory findings, practitioners who both support and oppose special class placement explain the dubious results as a product of design problems that plague field based experiments (i.e., contamination by extraneous variables, non random assignment of subjects) (Bruininks and Rynder, 1971; Guskin and Spicker, 1968).

With the advent of public law 94-142, public schools are mandated to provide education to children in the least restrictive environments possible. Evaluators, policy makers and practitioners are now asking "does it work?" "Is mainstreaming efficacious for the disabled child?" And "What about their typical peers?" By taking the client, in this case children, as the unit of analysis, efficacy studies lose sight of the historical, political, cultural and social context within which treatment modalities are implemented.

For the past two years we have been doing qualitative field research (unstructured interviews and participant observation) (Bogdan, R. and Biklen, S.K., 1981) in twenty five mainstreaming school programs. We got our sample by asking parents, administrators and other service providers to nominate programs they considered to be exemplary in integrating disabled youngsters. We chose sights that received multiple nominations. Our sample contained a wide range of types of programs as well as programs that served a wide range of types of disability. The concern of our research

was not with the efficacy of mainstreaming in the narrow clinical sense. We did not approach our research with the question, "does mainstreaming work?" Rather, we wanted to explore how it worked. Our goal was to see what actually went on in schools, how people thought about mainstreaming, what they did about it, how teachers, administrators and students experience it. While traditional efficacy studies, by design, try to purify the treatment of controlling for extraneous factors such as history, the community the schools are located in, as well as the culture and structure of schools, that was our focus. Rather than isolating discrete variables, our approach has been to start with descriptive case studies. What follows is the first of those studies, a description of a program for "learning disabled" and "neurologically impaired" students at Hutton High School.*

*All the names of persons and places have been changed.

Hutton High: An Overview

Hutton is one of Central City's four comprehensive high schools. It was built in the mid-fifties and recently renovated at the cost of over three million dollars. Central is a medium size American city located in the energy consuming northeast. Residents will tell you, with a hint of pride, that it is used as a marketing test area because it parallels the country as a whole in ethnic, racial and socio-economic composition. It is typical in other ways. As you go east from the downtown on Cole Street, the buildings change from large banks and stores to slums and public projects, to old declining stately one family residences, to better suburban homes, to more recently built suburban developments. Hutton is on Cole, on the edge of the city, just beyond the old one family houses and before the upper middle class suburb of Manchester. The homes around the school are well kept and substantial, but the people in the area say, "it is not as nice as it used to be." When the cities of the Northeast were more popular, it was thee place to live. Being a neighborhood school, its students were the sons and daughters of lawyers, doctors and professors. It was distinguished by its merit scholars and roster of students who had gone on to the most prestigeful colleges in the country.

In the early sixties, with the flight to the suburbs, Hutton began losing some of its professional population. In addition, with urban renewal downtown, the poor inner city Black neighborhoods began moving further up Cole Street. Madison High School, the school located downtown, use to serve the inner city population but early in the seventies all of its facilities, with the exception of the one vocational wing, were closed. Many of the poor inner city students were reassigned to Hutton. Presently, Hutton High has almost forty two percent of its 1,100 plus student body, Black, a percentage that the superintendent of schools as well as the principals

know is close to the maximum allowed before a school can be subjected to court ordered desegregation, a predicament they want to avoid.

Old timers to the school and residents who had children in the school in the sixties and early seventies, tell war stories. During the flower child-Viet Nam era, Hutton had a principal that is described as being an expert on innovation and creative curriculum but an incompetent disciplinarian. The kids ran wild, the story goes, embroiled in various movements afoot, getting inspiration from the campus of a major University a few miles away. There was racial strife, a strong anti-war movement, drugs and "hippies". Hutton's reputation began to tarnish among many middle class parents as they worried about the dangers they imagined lurked behind the lockers.

Hank Polsky has been the principal for five years. He is known for running a tight ship. While some parents describe him as too authoritarian, the great majority express their appreciation of Mr. P., as he is affectionately referred to, for establishing law and order and a truce in racial strife. His dream is to turn Hutton around, to have it gain back some of the glory of the old days. But the battle is uphill and he knows it. For now, he would settle for having it remain as good as it is and to have it better serve the needs of poorer students. Approximately two hundred and fifty of the middle class children who could go to Hutton, choose not to, enrolling in private and parochial schools. One of the hopes Hank has is to draw some of these students back while satisfying the present college bound population so that they will not leave. This strategy is one way he hopes to deal with the unfavorable racial balance and equally troubling problem, declining enrollments.

Throughout the school district, the school age population is on the decline. With inflation, there has been budget cuts and reduction of services. The teachers came close to striking last year over a contract dispute mainly involving wages. Rivalry between schools in the city is high especially between Hutton and Manchester. Principals of the various schools have been set against each other in their struggle for funds. Principals don't get things easily in the district except for troublesome students and "dead wood" teachers other principals are trying to pass off. Hank is particularly concerned with having to drop subjects that have low enrollments (advanced languages, college biology, math and English) but serve the college bound students that he is interested in maintaining.

The spirit at Hutton school is far from bleak. There are exciting things happening; an accomplished drama group, a new olympic size swimming pool that has already brought hundreds of community residents to the school each week and has been an impetus for the development of the athletic program. Some students do obtain impressive scholastic records. The school is attractive and well maintained.

Increasingly, people think of it as a "safe" place to send their children. While keeping the middle class is a dominant concern of Hanks, he is concerned and under pressure to improve the performance of low achieving students. The state has recently instituted a minimum competency requirement for graduation. This test looms large in his thoughts in that continued certification, it has been threatened, depends on eighty percent of the seniors passing.

Most teachers and administrators describe the school as consisting of two types of students: the strong and the weak. As one teacher told me:

> We really don't have a bell curve, no substantial middle. You got the poor from the projects and downtown and then the University kids and those from Mulroy Hills.

Some of the strong students are sons and daughters of Black professionals as well as inner city Blacks, and there are Blacks and Whites that form friendships across racial lines but by and large friendship groups are color matched and a greater proportion of the poor students are Black. Not that there is overt hostility between the races or if you go into the lunchroom or walk down the hall, you would not see an occasional Black and White together. But there are "Black students" and "White students". While not fully socially integrated, the Black students I talked to agreed with the comment:

> "Now the Black and White stuff here ain't that bad. Machias High, that's got a lot of Blacks but it's a White school. This isn't. Here you got Black kids in different activities, on committees and stuff." (a Black student)

But on the other hand, Hutton was described to me as:

> "...a fashion show. Everyone tried to outdo the other. You talk to kids around here and that's what they'll say. The kids in my neighborhood talk about it in that way... It's not only how they dress that makes it a fashion show, it's the way people are showing off." (a Black student)

Partly because of the past, the era of academic excellence, and because high schools are defined that way, still an important thing to show off is academic achievement. While for some that means high grades in regents classes and getting into Harvard, for others it means accumulating enough Carnegie units and passing the Minimum Competency Test so

they can, as they put it, "walk across that stage". Hutton High, by expecting and requiring certain minimum academic achievement in order to advance, places some of its students, no matter how hard they try, in a dubious position of being inferior, at the bottom of the heap. Some drop out, but as I was told less and less of this occurs. Lack of jobs, free lunches, medical care, keeps more and more kids hanging on, if not in high school. While they are present in increasing numbers, students who do not achieve academically, who fall behind the minimum standards, are marginal to the school, its failures.

The community Hutton is located in, Hutton's history, its problems, its strengths, its students, and what it values have to be understood in order to grasp the meaning of special education and mainstreaming in this institution. What is being done at this school for neurologically impaired and L.D. students is considered exemplary by some but if it works it is because it has modest goals that fit the culture of the school. It's goal is to help students who are marginal to the school, survive, to hold on, and to make it through, to "walk across that stage".

Administration

There has been a lot of inbreeding in Central City's School Administration. Hank like most administrators have come up through the ranks and realize, given their commitments to family and community and declining job opportunities in other districts, that they will remain employed by the district for the rest of their work lives. Even though many of the administrators are young, in their late thirties and forties, they are old timers in the sense that they have been around, and have strong opinions about how the system works.

Hank like other administrators in the district think in terms of there being two distinct categories of administrators; those in the Central office or "downtown" and those in the school, or as they put it "on the front lines". The latter includes principals. While principals' futures are intimately tied to the district, the central office administrators feel that the success of the district is intimately tied to having things happen in the schools. There is a lot of conflict and charges levied between the downtown and the principals about who's responsible when things don't happen, but it's within the family. There is a good deal of acting though and drawing the line but there is a spirit of reluctant cooperation on both sides. Hank like other principals identify with "their" schools and only with each other in confirmation of the difference between the central administration and themselves.

Principals in the Central City School District have a degree of autonomy. Special Education programs are not "forced down their throats", "you are given a choice, or at least you are consulted". The principal's dispositions toward programs for "disabled students" are important in having them placed in the schools and can affect their nature once they are there. Hank is positively disposed.

Hank, responding to the question, "Why have you taken special education classes into your school", reveals his motivation:

> "I'll be honest. Everyone has the right to an education but lets face the other reasons. This high school has an unfavorable racial balance and declining enrollment. To put it bluntly, I need bodies. If the students are desirable, the other principals will fight over giving them up. Special education provided me with a chance because principals don't fight for the handicapped, at least not yet."

It's clear that Hank sees special education programs as a tool to solve problems. He sees taking the lead among the high schools in developing special education programs as a way of bringing recognition to the school. Others, in the same circumstances, see such programs not as a help and a credit but as a burden. Who knows why Hank sees it the way he does; perhaps his religious background, or the fact that he has a relative active in special education, or his optimism, or his pro-active approach to problems.

Hank wanted the program for neurologically impaired and learning disabled kids but all the marks are not plusses for Hank with special education. He has immediate problems to respond to.

> "We're under pressure to start this new qualifying school for kids who aren't keeping up to grade level (not special education). Then they keep hitting us with budget cuts."

While I was observing at Hutton High, Hank was asked to take a self-contained class for autistic kids, the first such program in the city. His reaction to that request is instructive in the ordeal of balancing his positive disposition to special education and the other pressures he is under.

> "I just can't handle it with all the pressure I'm under now. We have three EMH programs and then Laura's severely emotionally disturbed class and then the LD and the resource room. I want to start good programs, programs that can work.. that can bring the kids together with other kids. The district asks me to take kids and they give you a special ed teacher and nothing else. Hell, if you keep taking classes, that's an additional load on the regular teachers. The special ed teacher can't teach the high school curriculum. These handicapped kids, if they're in regular classes, have to be with regular teachers but they don't get any support. The central office doesn't realize that it takes a hell of a lot more resources than just the special ed teacher to run a special ed program in a high school."

Hank's approach to the central office is suspicious. At times, he thinks the people downtown are playing the numbers game. "They are more concerned with how it looks on paper than with what is going on." Every new class he takes, he tells me, there are promises made about teacher's aides and additional resources but once the program gets in, they start withdrawing such help.

Hank is sincere in wanting the special ed program to be exemplary and to be a positive force in the school, but while he is willing to add classes, he has not developed a cohesive program. At Hutton, each special education class is an entity unto itself. There is no central planning for all the activities. In addition, these classes are not integrated into the larger school, that is, while they are physically present (integrated) and their students may be with typical students, their presence has not been articulated so as to make them an integral part of this school, a school which honors academic achievement. The kids may be in the school but how special education fits into Hutton's philosophy, what it values and strives for, its way of doing things, has yet to be conceptualized. The central office, from Hank's perspective, has not been very helpful. He is not sure who is in charge of making special education work in his school. He feels that what goes on in his school is his responsibility but when special ed programs were more centralized, the director of special ed was in charge and Hank deferred to his presumed expertise.

Hank knows very little about the nuts and bolts of special education. The director of special education in the central office is seen as having the technical knowledge concerning types of disabilities and what children who have specific disabilities need. By pointing out Hank's lack of

knowledge is not to criticize him. When he did his degree work, special education was not a part of the curriculum. He does take part in various educational opportunities, but none have provided him with a way of thinking about special education so as to do effective planning. This puts him in a bind he feels. He is pro-integration, if it is done the right way, that the program is good, but he is not sure what is "good". He also feels distrust toward the central office. He feels he is responsible for his school and for the special ed program within it but he gets advice from the central office which he does not trust completely. He feels that the central administration's interests may not always coincide with his and his school. He is not in a good position to effectively negotiate with them. For example, demand certain resources in exchange for taking on additional special education classes.

Marge's Program

While officially known as a resource program for neurologically impaired and learning disabled students, most people including Hank refer to the program that is our focus as "Marge's program". Marge's program evolved out of existing programs. As Hank explained:

> "We looked around and could see that some of the kids that were in the school already, were learning disabled. Some couldn't read and they didn't have a program. Marge was certified and interested, so we figured we might as well set it up."

Mr. P. originally brought Marge (Mrs. Katz) to the school to be a teacher in a resource room. He recruited her or "stole her" as such a transfer is often referred to by principals, from a jr. high in the district. He heard she was good and he is happy because he didn't get fooled. She works hard and is effective. While Marge will complain and demand and give Hank "a hard time", he respects her and he is glad he

has got her. She is satisfied with Hank. One thing that Hank is particularly happy about with Marge is the way she has become an integral part of the school, as he put it:

> "I believe that the special ed teachers ought to really be a part of the school, not islands. The teachers have to be integrated otherwise the other teachers aren't interested. I don't go around twisting any teachers' arms about taking handicapped kids. The special education teachers do. They have gained the respect of all of the teachers and that makes whatever is happening here, happen."

Mr. P. supports the concept of mainstreaming and he supports Marge but he has conflicting demands, and limited expertise. He will fight to help the program when asked but for the most part, it is Marge's program.

The Teacher and The Aide

Unlike many special education teachers, Marge not only participates in the school as a teacher of "special students", she coaches the tennis team, is active in other ways in school affairs and she can be counted on to appear at regular school events. She is in and out of the teachers' lounge, in the halls, up visiting other teachers. She does much of her business with regular teachers through casual encounters that regularly occur. Marge's presence is known in the school. She knows many people and uses the school's resources to enhance her program.

She is an energetic, attractive, well dressed, black reddish haired, thirty seven year old woman who has two children of her own and a husband who is a businessman. She went to a small state teachers college in New York and was permanently certified as an elementary school teacher upon completing her degree in the early sixties. She worked in a suburban school district for a number of years but didn't like it and quit. Jobs

became hard to get and she did not have one. Then one day, as she tells the story, she was called by the Director of Special Education in Central City (who has since left) and asked if she wanted to work as a resource teacher in a junior high. This was eight years ago. As Marge puts it, "I didn't even know what a resource teacher was. The way it was described wasn't exactly the way it was either."

Marge got her training on the job. Mona, the teacher who taught the resource program next to hers at the junior high, was "great". "She was so positive. She taught me everything I know." Mona is now at Hutton, too, across and down the hall and still a supportive colleague.

The state department of education began making moves to certify special ed teachers. Marge had been a resource room teacher for three years and therefore fell under a grandfather clause which made her eligible to receive permanent certification as a teacher of the learning disabled and emotionally disturbed. As she points out, "this was without ever having taken a special education course." She does not identify with the field of special education, and this may be to her advantage in making her program at Hutton High a success.

To this day, she has not taken any formal training in special education. She has taken district workshops, the most helpful to her being a structured learning training program. In regard to training experiences in special education, she has this to say:

> "Lots of times when they talk about learning disabilities and emotional disturbance, they discuss how the people become learning disabled and emotionally disturbed, the various theories, the origins of the conditions. What I really need is help with dealing with what the kids are now and what I can do to help.. How I can help them live on their own."

The year prior to this, Marge was a resource teacher at Hutton High. This is the first year of her program for neurologically impaired, learning disabled students, although a number of the students mentioned that they did not think that it was very much different from what they did last year, and two teachers indicated that they did not know that she was involved with a new program. As she explains it:

> "Before this year, I was doing a resource program. There were kids in that program and E.M.H. and E.D. programs that weren't really being served properly. They were more learning disabled and neurologically impaired than what those programs served. The resource program was moving much more to a model for serving the emotionally disturbed. There was a need for this kind of program so I volunteered."

She is pleased with what she has accomplished.

> "The teachers here are really terrific. I had my doubts but everything is working out. There are other special education programs in the school; three E.M.H. classes, a severely emotionally disturbed and the resource. So the teachers here know that there are different kinds of kids and they are in the regular class. All but the severely emotionally disturbed are mainstreamed. It makes it easier when the teachers are great. In some ways I am lucky because I was here before as a resource teacher. I have some of the kids now that I had last year. These kids needed more academic stuff and less social and therapy. This type of program is more appealing to me."

Marge's previous experiences with resource programs left her frustrated and ready for a change. Thinking back on the students she had in junior high school, she says that many of them are now in jail. A young man who was currently on trial for murder in Central City is one of her ex-students. As she puts it, "having those kinds of students 'really gets you down.'"

She describes her present students as having more physiological and learning problems and not being "as emotionally disturbed" as those she had last year. Two of the students, Jason and Leroy she points out, have

behavior problems in addition to their neurological problems. While some of the students have been in trouble in school and with the police, for the most part, she thinks of them as "nice kids". Even those of her students that are behavior and attendance problems, she gets along with well. They are responsive to her requests. She cares about her students and they care about her. This personal bond she has with the students is central to what the program contributes to the students' well being.

I asked Marge what was satisfying about her job. She said:

> "Take people like Mark. Now, if you look at his record, he sounds awful. He has made a lot of progress. And, last year, three graduated. I don't know, some of these kids are my kids. I really love them. I try to do something for them."

While Marge describes her students as "neurologically impaired" and "learning disabled", she has no training which would indicate that she has an understanding of what these phrases mean professionally. For her they mean that the school psychologist in consultation with the school psychiatrist has officially designated them as having these conditions. She sees their problems in simpler terms "they have trouble learning" and sees such classifications as administratively useful but not very meaningful.

Reading through the records it is apparent that such designations are made in light of what programs are available. That is, before Marge's class existed, there were no programs for children designated neurologically impaired and learning disabled at the high school level and most of the children who are now in the program were not labeled as such. It is only recently that they have been reclassified. Her students have been in classes for educable mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed and resource programs prior to this year. Marge, in part, attributes

their educational background as a source of their problems in that she sees that they have not been prepared to learn orally (instead of by the printed page), something that she emphasizes in her approach. In commenting on her own preparation for heading up the program, she points out that most of the students are functioning at an elementary school level so her training in reading and math are appropriate.

Alfred, or Mr. Armstrong as the students call him, is the full time teachers aide attached to the program. The principal, Marge and everyone who is attached to the program sing his praises. He is reliable, interested and active in the program. Born in Alabama, he moved to Syracuse when he was very young. He went through the public school system, graduating from Hutton's football rival, Manchester High. His first job with the school system was a hall monitor in a junior high. When a teaching assistant working in the same school in a resource program left, he applied and got the job. Later he asked for a transfer and wound up with Marge. He is pleased with their relationship. Alfred likes his work but the pay is difficult for him to live on. He goes to college two nights a week and he doesn't have money to have much of a social life. He is working toward a degree in social work, is twenty seven years old, about five feet, eleven inches and he is Black.

The Room

Marge's room is on the first floor half way down the corridor at a busy intersection. Across the hall is another special education class, a resource class, but the other special education programs are spread out through the school. The room Marge occupies is small, perhaps half the size of a regular room. Her homeroom class, which is comprised of typical students has about twenty five in it and they pack the room. During

homeroom there are not enough seats to accommodate all. One wall is windows facing an open space which makes the room light. The class is set up with Marge's desk in front, and a circle of seats all around the sides. Most of the chairs are made of plastic and have large formica top writing surfaces attached. Others have no writing surface attached and are behind desks. The furniture is not uniform in its vintage or style. The impression is that it was furnished with what could be scrounged from the storage room. In general, the room is not very attractive. In the front of the room on the lefthand side, looking toward the blackboard is an old t.v. high off the ground on a stand. It was never used when I was there or referred to as working and being used. It serves as a place to store a box. There is a small American flag sticking out of the wall next to the blackboard. Marge's desk is cluttered with books and papers, some are in piles. There are two filing cabinets in front with a very small cheap globe on one. There is a bulletin board next to the door with a sign on it giving emergency evacuation instructions. On the cork is written, graffiti style, "Rams No. 1".

The Students

There are thirteen students in Marge's program. Besides having been enrolled in the program and having a history of school failure, there is great diversity among the students who spend the fourth period in room 108. Almost all were left back in early grades. By the time they were in junior high, they were all reading at levels far below their grade level, many at the standard of the second and third grade. All had spent time in various special education classes. Most have had "their problem" or diagnosis changed several times. Lou, for example, who is not seventeen and about six foot two inches, was diagnosed early in elementary school as having delayed speech, attributed to emotional disturbance. After

having a series of tests, his IQ is listed as being fifty four and being mentally retarded. An IQ (full scale Wechsler) given two years ago resulted in a score of eighty three and he is now, labeled "learning disabled". While all the students in the program have officially been diagnosed either learning disabled or neurologically impaired by the school districts psychiatrist, in reading through the records, one gets the feeling that such a designation is as fragile as all the rest that have been applied to these youngsters during their careers. One gets the impression that for the most part, the professionals do not know what the problems of these children are and at another historical period, in another place, they might not have diagnosed what they are now.

Controversy fills the professional literature around the concept of learning disabled. It seems fruitless to argue that these students are or are not what it says they are in the records. People involved in and related to Marge's program accept the label and use it but there are certain ironies about the way some of the students are referred to. Lou, for example, is referred to as "really learning disabled" as if the rest of the students are somewhat less than fully. Some of the students are described as not really belonging in the class but placed there because of parental pressure. One boy, it is felt, isn't really handicapped but his father, who is influential in the community wants him to get the special attention the program offers. Another boy is described as "really" EMH (Educable Mentally Handicapped) but his parents did not want him in an EMH program because he was better than that. As people involved in the program, other students have stories that suggest that their reason for being in this class is not fully explained by an objective psychological diagnosis. Jason, for example, a quick talking, inner city black youngster is known for his use of drugs and getting into trouble. He was a student of Marges

when they were both in junior high. Marge took him in the program because she wanted to do something for him. Now do not get me wrong, with perhaps one exception, the students who I observed in the program had serious academic problems. That is not disputed. It's that they are "neurologically impaired" or "learning disabled" of the meaning and use of those terms that I raise. While three of the students might be referred to as odd looking, only the students with C.P. are so different to stand out in a crowd. For the most part, they go unnoticed in the hall.

The family backgrounds and experiences of the students vary widely. Some live around Hutton and come from professional families. Others come from inner city and are poor, others are working class. Over half of the students are transfer students from other quadrants in the city. They come especially for the program. These students are less likely to have friends outside of the program, and appear least socially integrated.

Marge's class is racially mixed. Of the twelve who participated in the program while I observed, six were White and six Black. All the Black students were male and in total there were only three females. While close friendships in the class are between students of the same sex and race (Maxine and Pam, Philip and Mark, Jason and Leroy) there were friendly conversations, joking and indications of concern across racial groups. Philip helps Sara out of the room with her wheelchair. Mark, Pam, Maxine and Philip often joke, playing around with such games as take the comb. Jason and Leroy are not hostile toward the other kids in the class but they remain detached. They identify with each other and their friendship seems to be predicated on the fact that they are street wise, and have been in trouble with the police and do not take school too seriously. Lou and Bob appear to be the only social isolates. The students and the staff told

me that they thought that the class was more socially and racially integrated than the rest of the school. Some of the students in the program are closely intertwined with friends outside the program; others rely almost solely on class members for friendships.

I interviewed all the students who attended the program while I observed. Some were extremely articulate in their views of Hutton and their place in it. Their relation to the program and how it is working for them has to be understood in the context of programs they have been in before and the particulars of their situation. To illustrate, let me share what some of them told me.

Sara lives near Hutton. She is white and has cerebral palsy. She is the only student who is physically demonstrably different in the program. She is confined to a wheelchair, is usually well dressed, although nothing high fashion. She is pleasant. I asked her about the program.

> I like this program. I'm happy to be in this high school. I'm proud to be with my own neighbors. I'm eighteen and last year I was in a junior high. Kids in the neighborhood would ask why I was going there and I told them they didn't have a program here. I felt real separate, real different. In junior high I only had one or two friends. I was only out of the resource class one or two classes, English and Math. Here it is just like normal. All my classes are with everyone else. I'm treated like everybody else. I'm not different. They accept me for what I am, I guess.

> I was petrified before I came here. I worried about if anyone would talk to me. I worried about my teachers. I worried about whether I could get along. Worried if I would be able to get around the building. At first, I was very insecure and use to run to Mrs. Katz all the time. Now I am more confident and only use her a little. I didn't know what I thought about what the other kids would do. I thought they'd ignore me or make fun. The L.D. thing, they can't see that except if they ask me to read. I worried the kids would find out. I worried that somebody would give me a note to read. What would I tell them. Should I tell them that I couldn't read. Then they would know. I can talk fine. I am not nervous but if they gave me something to read, I'd be real nervous and then people would know.

> Then there is my wheelchair. I didn't know how they (the kids in the school) would take that. What surprised me most about the school was the people. They were so nice. You always have a few troubles. Once or twice a kid will be nasty. One kid told me that if I ran him over, he'd beat my White ass but that is not usual. I feel that I am finally in my school. There are always some brats. One girl doesn't like me. She told me that I shouldn't be here; that I ought to be in my own room. But I am used to threats. They're just ignorant. They can't help it.

The day I interviewed Pam, she had on a preppy v-neck sweater with a madras blouse underneath. Her hair is dark brown with chestnut running through. She is a pretty girl, sporty, someone you might expect to see shopping in a suburban fashion store. She is pleasant but her smile is sometimes reluctant, as if she is not sure when she laughs if she is following. Pam, is friendly with the other students in the program but she identifies with her friends who live where she does, in the area around Hutton High. She participates in the regular school activities and is on one of the girls varsity teams.

I asked her if she would mind if I talked to her. It was during the first period and she was there with Leroy and Alfred. She had come for special help. Pam is self-conscious about being identified with "special education". The first half of the year she flunked social studies rather than ask the teacher for special help or draw attention to herself by having Mrs. Katz intercede.

What do you think of this program you are in, I asked.

> It's good cause you need help and stuff and you get it here. Sometimes I don't feel good about being here. When I come here they ask why are you going in there? Are you dumb or something? These are just the kids around. These are my so called friends but not my real friends. My real friends don't say anything. But I never talk to my friends about this program. I don't know, I wouldn't want to tell them about the trips or anything because they'd think they were dumb. I am afraid my friends would say something that would make me feel bad.

Although the program is an embarrassment to her, Pam feels strongly that it is important for her to be in it.

High school is tolerable for Pam. If it was not for her academic problems, she would be more central to the school. I asked her when she got up in the morning whether she thought that she didn't want to come to school. She told me:

> I may not want to come but it is worse sitting at home watching television. I always want to come because that's too boring.

Pam like all the students with the exception of Leroy hopes to get a diploma. She would like to go to college but, "I worry that I might not be able to get in."

Leroy was there the morning I interviewed Pam. He was on the other side of the room sleeping. Leroy's life is in stark contrast to Pams. He lives downtown in a run down area. Born in Alabama he came North with his mother, father and twelve sisters and brothers before he started school. He is the youngest. Only two of the twelve have finished high school. His father no longer lives at home but he still lives in town and sees Leroy occasionally. He is on parole for a robbery he was involved in two years ago. While I was observing, he again got in trouble with the police. Leroy has a CETA job doing maintenance. He spends a half day at Hutton and then goes down to Madison where he is in a modified mechanics program and then goes to his job. His job provides money and while I was observing, he exhibited his resources in new clothes that he bought. Leroy talks slow. He looks larger than his five feet, ten inches height because of his solid build. The day I interviewed him, he had on a black shiny shirt and black pegged pants. He wears his hair short, and although not defiant, he is often a reluctant participant in class activities.

Leroy, what do you think of the program you are in?

It teaches you some basic stuff. If I wanted to learn science or algebra, I'd have to stay a long time in this school because I'm pretty slow. You need stuff like that to graduate but I'm not gonna graduate. That's what they told me, Mrs. Katz and the vice principal. It is too late for me now. I'm gonna try to learn those basic things that might help me. I'm seventeen now. They say I missed too much time. I don't like not graduating but they say that if I settle down, I could learn some basics and train for a job.

I've been in this program for two years and in special education all through elementary school. Being in this class gives you some problems with other people. If they know that you are in here, they don't react to you the same way. It is like they think that you are not like them. They would think that you are not smart. Like they are going to college and you're not. You are different. I would want to go to college, I would want it that way but that ain't the way it is. I tell some close friends that I am in this class but I wouldn't tell the others. It gives you problems. Special education means you can't keep up.

This is not a school I would want to stay at except for the program. If it wasn't for the program, I would have dropped out. I feel comfortable but on certain days I don't feel like being around anyone. I feel frustrated. I hope those days go faster. I keep getting the work wrong and I'll ask Mrs. Katz. If I still can't get it, I get frustrated.

I asked Leroy what he wanted to be after school and he told me:

I want to be what I can get. All I can get is work with my hands. That's the farthest I can get in life. I don't like it but that's what I'm told so that's what I have to think about.

Jason was the only student in room 108 during the third period so I went up to him and we began talking. Before that I had noticed this large, perhaps six times life size ceramic hand on the shelf in back of Marge's desk. It was a dark indigo blue and it was striking because of its color as well as how well done it was. The glaze gave it a special shine. The two middle fingers on the sculpture were bent down into the palm and the thumb was bent over the two. I asked across who had done it and he told me that Jason had, in the three "d" class. Jason's eyes were red. They

are very often red and watery. He yawns a lot. He is about five feet, eight inches, thin and wears a cap. Even though he often looks like he has just gotten up or should go to bed, he still has a way about him that indicates he is full of life. He carries himself in a way that tells people that he is cool and that he is ready to tell you about it with a quick remark or a glance.

I went up to Jason and said, "What about that hand. It is nice. What do the fingers down mean?" "Wine, you know that kind of cheap wine they sell. That's the sign for it." He had on a white shirt, with a ring around the collar, a brown sweatshirt and dress pants. On the desk in front of him, there was a short bristled brush, like a clothes brush, which he occasionally would brush down his short hair. He kept taking off his gold cap in a nervous way. "Do you mind if I talk with you? I want to interview you."

> No, just sit down. First of all, let me tell you that I'm in this class but I'm not like most of them. I am slow in some things but I'm not as slow as them. In some things I'm slower than your average, but in some things I'm a lot faster. I don't like being around them too much because they give me a bad reputation. These kids, they're okay, I mean they are all right to talk to and things like that but they are slow. Now don't get me wrong. This program helps me a lot because of Mrs. Katz. She helps me with my book reports and when I get homework, I can come and she can help me. In that way, it's really good but I'm not as slow as them.

Jason often makes sounds of disgust during the fourth period, to show that the work they are going through is too easy for him but he has difficulty doing any written work.

I asked Jason what he planned to do after school.

> I'm gonna get me a job in a factory. I'm gonna do that and work there for about five years and make enough money and then open myself a store, a corner store, you know, selling groceries and that kind of stuff, a little beer. Can start it off small but then I will grow and then maybe I'll have me four or five different stores and big stores. You don't need a diploma to do that, to run a store or anything, but I'm gonna get me a diploma. If I could pass in college, I'd go there too. I'd love to go to college. I'd go for business.
>
> I don't have any friends in this class, I mean I talk to them but I wouldn't call them friends. I don't have any real friends in this school. You see, I'm supposed to go to Miram High. I live down on the south side. I got kicked out of there. They just wanted to get rid of me.
>
> I like it here because I don't have any friends. If I had them, I'd be getting into trouble all the time. I like Mrs. Katz. I've known her for a long time. She kept me out of trouble. If I'm in the right, she will really stick up for me.

I asked him about the minimum competency test. He told me:

> Well, I hope I pass. Now my sister, she got out without taking those. That really ain't fair. Now a days, they have tests that are a lot harder than they used to have. You can't get a good job without a diploma. Well for that matter, you can't get a job with one.

I asked him about his family and he told me he had a younger brother and older married sister, a mother who he wanted to do good for and a father who "hasn't been around in a long time." Jason told me that a lot of the Black kids here are what he calls east side punks. He comes from the tough side of town, the south side.

> You see, most of the kids that I hung out with in jr. high school, they're in jail or they have been kicked out of school. My three friends that I was with, they are out.

I asked Jason why he was in the class and he said that it was for his behavior problems. I asked him "did you ever hear the word learning disability?" He said,

> Ya, that's what they labeled me. But I'm much more advanced than that. I'm not like most of the kids in this class. You see, but it will help me graduate. The only problem is that they label you that and that is the way you are going to be known for the rest of your life. When they look you up in the school records, there it is. You are that way for life. It wouldn't help you get a job, people seeing that. They don't want people with learning disabilities. All I want to do is graduate, though, that's what I need. Now, if after being labeled and I don't graduate, then you really got it bad.
>
> I thought about going out for football next year. I'll be eighteen tomorrow though. I probably won't be able to go out.

He said this in a tone of voice that indicated that he had just discovered that he was eighteen. He flashed in and out of deep thought, and came back with,

> This is a good program. I would say that I stand a fifty to seventy-five percent chance of graduating than if I was in the regular class.

He said that with less of the self-confidence and bravado than he spoke with before. I got the feeling that he didn't know what "percentage" meant.

Mac is a sixteen year old Black student with a friendly disposition. He carries himself with a maturity that is greater than his age. He is short and broad shouldered. This is his first year in high school.

I asked Mac about the program, whether he liked it. He said,

> It should be more open to talk about you and your problems and what you want to do. If you are in a special class, you can't be this and you can't be that. That is what the teachers tell you. They don't give you a chance. I'd like to be a musician but they say I can't be reading too well. Mrs. Katz is trying to fix me up so I can get some music lessons. I play the base, practice at home with a group. I'd like to get in the school band but nothing has been happening so far. Maybe next year. I'd like to read music but they don't know. There are lots of people playing jazz and they don't know how to read jazz. I'd like to finish here and like to go to Eastman up in Rochester. That is a good school. For me, with my special problems, it would be hard to get in.

I asked him, what are your special problems?

> I can't see any in myself. I see myself as really no different from anybody else but when I take those tests, I don't do too good. The people who give them to me see some stuff about me. I can't get along in a regular class. I'm a slower learner.

I asked about where he lived. He said he lived on North Maple with his parents. His father works in a factory and makes a fairly good living. He has got eight kids living at home and there were fourteen total in the family.

I asked him about the class. He said,

> Well, everybody in the class is kind of different. I really like the class actually. The kids are nice. I'd rather be in here and have somebody to help me. If they could fix me up with some classes in music, that would be better.

I asked him about liking school. He said,

> I know everyone here. That is why I wanted to come. I like it. When I went to Washington, they wanted to know where I was because they were all coming up here and I was going there. Now they ask me why I am not in their classes. I tell them that I am in math and everything, just like everybody else. They think I am just like them; that I don't have any learning problems. They don't know about this being a special program or anything. I mean it is not going to look right if I don't graduate with them. I'll probably be a year behind or so but it won't really bother me. I mean that is the way it is.

I asked him if some of his friends came in and saw him in this class and knew that it was a special class, how would he feel. He said,

> Well, it is not that I am ashamed but they would be just kidding around and bugging me. I wouldn't like them to find out because they'd be on my back but it wouldn't be all that bad.

I asked him if he was asked to read in class, how would he feel, He said,

> If you are around the broads you are used to talking to, it can be a problem. Cause there are things you can't read and you feel foolish. But I read pretty good. I read all that I can. The teacher helps me. A lot of the kids in the class can't read that good anyway.

I asked about friends in the class. He said that Jonathan was a friend and that Mr. Armstrong lived in his neighborhood. He said, "I get along with people pretty well. That is one thing."

I asked him what he thought about the competency test and he said, well, he thought it was good. That was one good thing about being in this class that you reviewed for the competency test. But he said,

> I don't think they should have them. It is dumb. A person can only remember a certain amount. Here you do things eight months ago and then you are expected to know it right then. If you were tested once on it, why don't they just listen to the teacher who tested you. They expect you to learn all that.

It was very, very striking that Mac had no idea of what the purpose of the competency test was. That here these programs that are invented in Albany they are received by the high school students. The high school students have absolutely no comprehension of their purpose.

I asked him if he ever thought about the Army. He said,

The Army could be good but he would rather be a musician.

I asked him about the trip he had taken to a factory the day before and he said it was alright but he wouldn't want to work there. It was boring. He said,

> I want to be known as somebody, not somebody who is on the assembly line. I want to make my own album. I want people to know me. I want to be on talk shows and be somebody.

As their comments suggest, being in Marge's program means different things to each student. For most, it is a sign of their failure. On the other hand, it is a chance for success; getting a diploma. For some, the friends at the school makes school worthwhile. For others, <u>not</u> having friends makes it worth it. All have to work at negotiating a relationship with typical students that minimizes their stigma. Some try to pass.

It is not clear what passing means. Does it mean not letting people know you can't read or does it mean not letting people know you are in Marge's program or are the two so interwoven that the problem evades analysis. For sure, the students have internalized the major values and goals of Hutton. Even if they know they won't walk across the stage, they want to. They longingly think of college, even though it may be far from their reach.

The Program

Officially, thirteen students are in the program although at most ten are present during any school day. One of the thirteen was never there while I observed. Each student who is in the program attends a regular homeroom (with typical students) and has a daily schedule that is similar, if not the same as a typical Hutton student. Six of the students spend the entire day at Hutton mostly attending regular classes with the other high school students. Some of these students are involved in extra curricular activities. Sara sings in the chorus and Pam plays on one of the varsity girls athletic teams. One of the students bowls in a league with students labeled mentally retarded. For the most part, those who have a full day program at Hutton are middle class white students. The remaining six students attend regular classes at Hutton in the morning and then go to vocational training programs (auto mechanic and carpentry) at a vocational center run by the school system in downtown Central City or to job placements. Three of the boys go to the city school run vocational center and then go to jobs. For the most part, the jobs that they are placed in are janitorial and are supported by CETA or other federally funded programs. There is a resource teacher down at the vocational center and the people at Hutton have mixed feelings about what goes on

there. Some of the programs are thought to be excellent but Marge has some questions. At the beginning of the year, Marge complained about the resource teacher not being active in working with the special education students. She wrote a letter to the central office about it and she says things have gotten a lot better. Marge mentioned that there is an automechanics program there with a sign, offensive to her, hanging over it saying, "Automechanics for the Handicapped" but when I visited the center, I didn't see it. The principal of the Vocational Center is open to the inclusion of special education kids but is not familiar with special education and resents the other high school principals steering predominantly academically inferior students to his program. He feels that technical education had a bad image in the city and it is in part due to principals seeing the program as a dumping ground for students who might be more appropriately served in their home school. Programs at the center include computer technician, beautician, fashion design, food service, welding, graphic design, tool and dye making, automechanics and carpentry. While I did not investigate fully what the programs were like for the students for Marge's class, they seemed pleased with the diversity that it added to their day.

With a few exceptions, all the students in the program meet in Marge's room every fourth period for special instruction. This instruction consists of two activities: basic skills learning and preparation for the minimum competency test that is needed for graduation. During the time I was there, it was the Spring. Increasingly time was spent on preparation for the minimum competency test which was given at the end of the school year.

Basic skills instruction means that the curriculum is directed at having students learn such things as:

Reading and Ordering From a Menu
Restaurant Language
Computing Sales Tax
Reading Signs Around Town
Reading Bus Schedules
Locating Places on Map
Opening and Using Bank Accounts
Planning a Budget
Understanding Taxes

Marge used a workbook for basic skills and goes over the book and questions paragraph by paragraph with the students. Below is a description of such a lesson taken from my notes:

> Marge stood in front of the class to indicate that the fourth period work was about to start. Mac came walking in late. Marge said, "Well, nice to see you. You got here. Were you late?" He said, "Ya, maybe ten, fifteen minutes." Marge said sarcastically, "Well that's good." Mac said, "The bus broke down." Two or three of the students made sounds of disbelief, "Oh," "yea," "fat chance." Marge said, "The bus broke down. Come on Mac." Mac said, "Now you come on. You know that dude that use to run track and play basketball. He use to be in that class of yours. Well, he was on the same bus. What was his name? You just ask him. He was on the bus too." Marge said, "I don't think you are going to go all this way making up things. If you say that's what happened, that's what happened, but leave it to you to be on the bus that breaks down."
>
> Marge began, "What we are going to do today is apartments. Remember how to look for apartments in the paper. We started it yesterday. Now open the book to ad #1." Most everyone had the booklet folded to that place. Marge and Alfred went around checking each one. "Look at ad #1. Does the apartment have a stove and a refrigerator?" Somebody said, "No". A few people said, "yes". Marge said, "Who said no. It says right there that it has a stove and refrigerator. See it's abbreviated. Remember the list of abbreviations at the start of the lesson. What about pets?" Everyone said in unison, "No pets." Marge continued, "Remember, don't guess. Look them up. What does Stu stand for?" Maxine said, "Stereo." Marge said, "Large sunny stereo, no, that's not it. Studio. What's a studio apartment?" "It's a small apartment with a small bedroom." "What's STV/Frig.?" They went to the list of abbreviations and someone said after a wait, "Stove". She said, "That's right, stove and refrigerator."
>
> Marge went through all the abbreviations in the second ad and then the third. One had HDW/FLRS which stood for hardwood floors. She asked, "Anyone know what hardwood floors are? Are these hardwood floors?" Leroy said, "No these ain't hardwood. They tiles and concrete." Another abbreviation was GDN which

stood for garden apartment. When she asked about that abbreviation someone yelled out garden and Mark said, "I should have thought of that." Marge gave an explanation of a garden apartment. "It's an apartment that is low to the ground where you can look out and see the lawn or the garden." She went through more of the ads in the book.

She started a discussion about security deposits. She asked what that meant. Jason said, "When you pay one months rent ahead." She said, "That's right and you also usually have to pay rent plus the security deposit, so when you go to rent an apartment you usually need two, full months of rent. That means if it's $150, you need $300." Leroy said, "Why do they keep the security deposit?" Marge said, "That's because, if you mess it up, they use the money to fix it. What about references? Why would you need references?" Mac said, "It's someone to back you up." Marge said, "That's right. They want to find out if you are going to be a good clean tenant." At this point, everyone seemed tremendously interested in the lesson. Everyone was watching whoever was talking. Marge said, "If you had an apartment, would you want to rent to someone who didn't keep the place up? They also may want your employer as a reference." Someone said, "Why's that?" Marge said, "Would you want to rent to someone who didn't have a job and who couldn't pay?" Mark said, "Well, you can get other money besides having a job." Leroy said, "Now come on now. A lot of apartments aren't like that." Mac asked, "Can somebody evict you if you have a lot of kids or something?" Marge explained how that depends on what's in the lease and how it was important to read the lease. Philip said, "But people who own buildings, they rip you off." Marge ignored this but he repeated it. Marge said, "Ya, a lot of people get ripped off. Hollywood actresses and actors get ripped off. If the rich get ripped off, you can get ripped off too." Philip said, "I didn't mean get tricked. The landlord he would come and steal things from your house. That's what happened to my uncle..."

As the content of this particular lesson reveals, examples that are used in the book are far from the lives of the inner city students that are in the class. At least five of the students live in the city housing projects or other parts of inner city housing and do not know about studio apartments and hardwood floors. Further, many of the prices listed in the book are unrealistic given the current economic scene. The materials raise important issues for the students, security deposits and slum landlords. Marge is sometimes open to talking about such issues and although her perspective is clearly that of a middle class white person. But she engages all students in a give and take which seems to minimize the vast

differences in the cultural experience between her and some of the students. Strangely enough, this cultural gap does not seem to interfere in the students liking her. This is in part because Marge is very direct with them, as well as with all the students she deals with, and they are direct with her. She has a quick wit and can out talk the students, and they respect this in her. In addition, her hard work and advocacy for them makes them feel she is on their side.

There is a wide variety of levels of functioning in the class and during such lessons, Jason makes noises indicating that what's going on is too easy for him. Other students have a difficult time following the lesson and others seem completely involved. In general, there is a high level of participation. With only seven or eight people in the room, Marge and her aide, Alfred, can involve most people in what is going on.

The second activity that dominates the fourth period is the minimum competency test. A year ago, the state regents instituted a policy that in order for a person to receive a high school diploma, they would have to pass a state wide minimum competency test, in addition to accumulating the necessary Carnegie units. Marge sees these requirements as oppressive keeping her from providing educational experiences that the students need. But she feels that in order for her students to have a chance in life, they have to have a diploma and is therefore dedicated to maximizing each student's chance of getting one. She feels that what is needed to pass courses and the test, is not what benefits her students the most. As she puts it:

> Lou, he really needs living skills, he doesn't need Shakespeare. The same with Philip. The Great Gatsby and Glass Menagerie, he needs that like a hole in the head. He is in regular English and doing fine. I record the stories so he can listen but he doesn't need that. Lou can't even take care of himself so he needs the French Revolution.

Another time she told me:

> What we need is a competency based program designed for each student in the program. It is silly to have kids spend four years sitting here when it makes no sense in terms of them. Some don't get diplomas any way.

The competency test and graduation were two of the most frequently mentioned topics during my observations. Alfred talks about it, so did the principal, and Marge mentioned it almost every time I visited. Success of the program is measured by getting diplomas. Toward the end of my observation, every fourth period with the exception of tuesdays was spent drilling for the minimum competency. During one period that I observed, Marge read paragraphs from an example test that the students had in front of them and then asked the students to pick the correct responses that were listed, to fill in blanks. She was drilling them for the reading comprehension section of the test.

> I was late to the fourth period. It had already started. Marge smiled as I came in and said, "Class, tell Mr. Bogdan what it is that you are doing now." Sara said, "We're studying for the minimum competency test to get your diploma." Marge started reading from an example test. "An onion is likely to make a person's eyes water. The oil in the onion turns into a vapor when exposed to the air. Smelling this vapor is one way to cry without having felt <u>blank</u> in the first <u>blank</u>." The students were to pick the letters (a,b,c or d) next to the words that fit in the blanks and write them on the paper. The correct answer was <u>grief</u> and <u>place</u>. She read through all the questions in unit 4 and then went over them and asked for the answers. She started with question 1. She asked each student for a set of answers. Most of the time they didn't get the correct answer on the first try. At the end Marge said, "Well, how did you do?" Philip said, "I only got three wrong." Marge said, "Terrific, very good. We'll get you across that stage yet."

As she told me, the regents had made a concession to the learning disabled lobby that students labeled learning disabled could have the reading comprehension part of the test read to them. In addition, they could bring calculators to the mathematic examination. Even with these modifications, some students are unlikely to pass. Students labeled

mentally retarded were the only special education students that could get a modified diploma. Those students labeled emotionally disturbed had to take the test with no special compensations such as those given to the learning disabled.

Marge talked about the test and requirements on a number of occasions. One time I asked her how often she had the students study for the test. She said:

> Every day. To me, it's just a joke. They say these L.D. kids, you can read the test, they can bring in calculators. The state says this is a reading test and you can read it to them. They are saying pass them anyway you want. I talked to Pam's mother last night on the phone. She wanted to know what her chances of graduating would be. She is going to be in the twelfth grade next year. I told her that I would do everything that I could to have her pass. I am not going to let her fail. This is ridiculous. The whole thing is ridiculous and I tell you I would do anything to help them get through it. If I can get these kids to get their diploma, I'm going to do it.

Marge mentions with pride, that last year, three of her students graduated with diplomas. She feels an intense loyalty to "her kids". This loyalty transcends what she sees as silly state regulations, and abstract rules concerning state examinations. She will do anything to get them through it, she is not willing to hinder the possibility of getting a diploma even if it means having a curriculum that is irrelevant to what she perceives as their long term interests. "Making it" is a phrase that is used synonymously with "getting him to walk across that stage" which means getting a diploma. As she puts it, "I try to help them as much as I can. Kind of support them. If they need help, I am here to give it to them. These are my kids."

Marge with the help of a teacher who is knowledgeable in career counseling, wrote a small grant last year which supports a program of career education for the students. There are either trips, speakers or

other career related activities. On trip day, the school bus leaves at approximately 8:30 and is gone most of the morning. Most of the students in the program choose to participate but there are always some that miss the bus. The trips also include students from the resource room across the hall. No typical kids participate. The idea of the trips is to introduce students to the world of work and instruct them as to the skills and attitudes needed to succeed in employment. Included in the program were ten trips to such places as the local newspaper, a brewery, a television studio, the airport, a hospital and various manufacturing plants. Some of the trips are described by the students as "boring" others "great". I only went on one trip, to the local newspaper. The career education teacher explained and asked questions of the tour guide which pointed out various kinds of jobs and employment related aspects of the work. What was emphasized in the talk was that this industry was mechanized and that there were very few jobs available. Those that were available went to people who were highly trained, if not with college graduates.

At one point in the tour, the vocational teacher said, "You see now how so many jobs that used to take muscle now take skill because you have all the machine to do the muscle. Lots of jobs awhile back, all it took was muscles." One of the boys on the tour responded, "That's all we got."

We got to one place and someone asked if there were any jobs that you didn't have to have an education for. The tour guide, a young college graduate obviously upwardly mobile, said, "Well, if you don't care what you do, you can get a job in the mailroom." Mark asked "how much does that pay?" The guide replied, "It pays as much as the pressroom. Only thing, there is no place to move up, the same thing with the press operators. That is a job that you'd stay in for your whole life."

The vocational teacher who was involved in the tour program laments the job situation. As she puts it, "there are just no jobs now. Ten years ago you could call up and you could get a job for anyone. With all this automation, you need skills to get work. These kids don't have it. We can place them through CETA but that doesn't lead anywhere." I asked if it wasn't depressing and Marge and the teacher talked about how it was more depressing to force these kids to sit through American History and high school English when what they really needed was survival skills.

The tours of factories and other business establishments varied. In trips to some of the larger factories, students told me the picture was not as bleak but by and large the program was introducing them to the world of work, and they were learning that they were marginal to it, marginal in the same way they are to Hutton High.

In addition to the activities already described, room 108 serves as a support center for the students in the program. Students can take their study halls in that room and use the time to get special help from Alfred, the teachers aide, and Marge. If a student is having problems with a particular subject and they are not getting anything out of the regular class sessions, they come to the room for tutoring. Other than the fourth period, there are never more than two or three students in room 108.

Marge and Alfred help the students in a number of ways. They explain assignments and suggest ways that they might tackle them. They provide audio recordings of readings they are assigned. They explain lessons that the students don't understand. They counsel and support, telling students that they can do it if they try. For the most part, the students in the program feel comfortable with Marge and Alfred and they come to her during the day to get a pat on the back or to unload some problem.

In another important way the program serves the students. Marge is the students' negotiator and advocate. If she spots trouble, if a student is not working or losing interest, or attendance falls down, Marge investigates and intercedes. She keeps up on where the students are in each class and confers with the teachers about progress. She represents the student to teachers that might not be familiar with the student and their problems. In addition, Marge advises and schedules each of the students. The official scheduling is done by computer but Marge, in conjunction with other school staff, makes sure that the schedules of the students contain teachers that they think will be supportive as well as a schedule that will meet their needs. As with the case of the vocational school resource teacher, Marge also sets things right when they are not working well for her students. Marge is a buffer, a person who provides flexibility, and some warmth and a personal representative in a school where students are thought of as being old enough to do things for themselves.

Some of the fieldtrips Sara did not participate in because the sites were not accessible by wheelchair. While Marge is an advocate for her students, she performs on a one to one basis. She is not sensitive to issues of access and other disabled rights issues that are being pressed for by those active in the disabled rights movement.

The students respect Alfred, listen to what he tells them, and talk to him about their problems. He sees some of them in their neighborhoods and has an excellent rapport with them. I asked him what he thought about the program. He told me:

> It makes sense, that is, for most people. Take someone like Jean, they manipulate it. It's good for those who really use it. When I was in school and there were kids like the ones here, they would feel humiliated. They would go into class and they would be asked to read and the teacher would tell them "come on now read." They couldn't read and they just felt humiliated. Some of them would stop coming or some of them would get after the teacher. The teacher would yell at them and they would yell right back at the teacher. This program makes it a lot easier for the kids who have got these kinds of problems.

Alfred assists in a number of ways. He tutors the students individually. He goes from student to student when Marge is giving a lesson to be sure they are on the right page and paying attention. He informally counsels them and helps control rowdiness. He goes on trips carrying Sara on and off the bus.

All the students in Marge's class have been designated as neurologically impaired or learning disabled and have been through the committee on the handicapped. All students in the class have I.E.P.'s (Individualized Education Program) but I was told and saw by inspection that "they are pretty much the same for each student." They vary as to the exact classes the students are in and the afternoon program but they are all the same where it says "Current Functioning".

> Auditory skills are strong enough to enable student to understand concepts presented in class discussions and lectures. Student can demonstrate understanding of concepts through alternative testing and evaluation format, e.g., oral exams, taped reports, taped oral responses to exam questions.

"Suggested Long Range Goals":

> Completion of regular classes having demonstrated mastery of the curriculum through alternative testing strategies.
>
> Student will pass competency tests. These tests can be read orally to the student by the L.D. teacher.

The Regular Class Teachers

Staff at the school including Mr. P. and Marge will tell you that all teachers at Hutton are not equally committed to providing the maximum learning environment for all students. Some are described as "just putting in time", others are people who "really care". As I already said, when the schedules are made up for the students in Marge's program they work it so that they are placed in classes where they feel the teachers "really care" and are not antagonistic toward the special education students. They suggest that some teachers are not as tolerant of diversity in their classes and would prefer not to have the students from the program with them. On the other hand, occasionally because of scheduling inevitabilities, students are placed with less desirable teachers and according to Marge and the principal, these placements seem to work out fine, also. On the whole, Marge feels positive about the teachers in the school and wonders if at times, she isn't a little hasty in judging a colleague unreceptive. During my visits, no incidences were reported to me of teachers acting in overt negative ways to special education students. Regular teachers relate with pride, stories of accomplishments with special education students. One story that was repeated was the student with one leg on the varsity swim team. Another, one of Marge's students going to the community college. I formally interviewed five regular teachers and talked to many more in the course of my observations about the program. Mrs. West's, an eleventh grade English teacher, positive comments are an articulate summary of the best experiences teachers have with Marge's program.

I asked her what she thought about the idea of integrating handicapped students in the school system. She said:

It is a good idea but only if you have somebody like Marge working with the teacher. It is alright if the kids are doing about the same thing or parallel things to the regular kids but to do a special lesson plan in a special curriculum for each handicapped kid is more than a teacher can do. Philip, he'll do a lot of the same things as the other kids. We read plays and novels, like the Great Gatsby. He doesn't read them but Marge went and put them on tape and he could listen. She works real hard to make sure that they have what they need to function with the regular class. Of course, he works at a different level.

If the kids are doing sentences and diagramming, I'd have Philip write simple sentences. The nice thing is that Marge finds out what we are doing. She will provide alternate material if he can't handle what is being done. One time, I had them write a play. Philip wrote one. It wasn't up to the quality of the others but he did put it down. He also gets his own vocabulary and spelling list from Marge.

One problem to face is that this is eleventh grade English that he is in, which means he is required to take the regents. It is suppose to count for one quarter of the mark. If he fails the regents but takes the competency test and he passes those, he gets sixty five averaged in as one quarter of his mark. I don't know if that is fair.

Having Philip in the class doesn't take all that much work but if I had a lot of kids like him, it would be hard especially if they were at very different levels. If I had a few that were about the same level that wouldn't be so bad. The important thing is that Philip tries. I like Philip. I have two other kids in one of my classes from Mrs. Pryor's room (a resource room with E.D. and E.M.R. kids). That is something else. They are behavior problems. They don't come. They don't have any motivation. I could do without them. Mrs. Meyle doesn't keep in contact the way Marge does. I have to take time to chase her down and I don't have that kind of time.

Back a couple of weeks, Philip started cutting and lying. Philip never lied before but he would tell Marge that he was in my class when he hadn't come. I don't know what it was but Marge got right after him.

I think there are three things that make a program successful. The first is the teacher contact - good rapport between the special ed teacher and the regular teacher. The second thing is that the special education teacher has to make an effort to go along with what is going on in the regular class. It may be just the same type of work but easier. The third thing is that the students have to be willing. You can't have behavior problems. A kid who is motivated but can't do the work, that's different than having someone who is disruptive or who cut or don't have any interest.

I asked if there was anything that she needed that might make taking special education students easier for her. She repeated a theme heard again and again among those who have contact with Marge's program.

> I separate serving Philip and money. I don't mind working with him. If they create extra discipline problems that's something different.

She began reflecting on Philip.

> I feel that it's important that an eleventh grader is in his own class, in the eleventh grade. The only thing that bothers me is I don't know how he feels. I know that he knows that the words that are given him are easier but I wonder how he feels inside. The kids treat him well. They like him. When he comes into the room they say 'Hi, Phil.' That's what they call him. The white kids say that. He sits with the black kids and he is very quiet but he gets along fine. It makes me feel good to have Philip in the class. I firmly believe that kids learn from each other so it is important that he be with other kids. He was really pleased with his grade at mid-semester and then he started goofing off. Kids like him can't do that. They have got to push and then keep at it. When he starts messing around, that's when Marge gets on him. Phil comes early so that we can talk a little. I think that is very important. That way, I don't have to call him up to talk to him about what he is going to do that day.
>
> But again, it's Marge that keeps on top of everything. You need someone who does things for you, not that you have to go after. I've got a lot to do this year. I'm the sophomore class advisor. The fact that Marge is there gives someone like Philip a sense of responsibility because he knows that there are people looking at him. If he was out in the school all by himself, he'd just be gobbled up. There is tremendous motivation created by knowing that Mrs. Katz is there; it keeps them on the straight and narrow.
>
> My biggest complaint is the size of our classes. We are suppose to have 110 to 125 students per day but we have more like 150. There is a lot of overload especially on the English. Someone told me I should file a grievance but who has the time. In Philip's class, there is 33. I teach five classes. I'm the sophomore class advisor. I don't even have time to be with my husband and clean house.

Another teacher who I talked to, a teacher who had been at Hutton during the academic heyday, stated positive feeling toward having special kids integrated but she too said that she would not be willing to make more than one lesson plan for her class. She talked about how the school had changed and how she taught to shoot for the middle. She said that she felt that those at both ends, the very gifted and the not so bright, suffered. Another teacher was not very positive about the attempt at integration.

> I find it frustrating. Some of them are on the fourth and third grade level. Some are doing well but it has to be geared for their level. One problem is always time. You don't have enough time. Now, Bob Porter, I don't know. He is so slow. He just doesn't get things done. With tests, I tell him just to hand it in as far as he got but he doesn't. I have to take him alone on a free period and only then do I learn where he's at. Some of them are no problem. Jason Brown, he adjusts beautifully. He has other problems but he is somebody who will really benefit when you give him extra time, you feel like you are accomplishing something. Jason is a loner. He doesn't participate in group activities. They all have a two minute speech to make that is coming up. The other day he came up to me and said, 'do you mind if I do the speech just to you?' He doesn't feel like be belongs to this group. Some of these kids have been accepted but Jason is a loner. Luca is a lovely boy. I have no problems withhim but if you ever saw him write, he knows it. I have somebody else, but you wouldn't know he had any problems. Marge's kids are eager to seek help, they want help but it is an awful struggle for them. They are not relaxed. You can see frustration written all over them. They want to do well but it is hard. Too bad we don't have graded classes. They'd feel better in there. They feel the pressure. Take Joe, we were reading Antigony, he couldn't read Antigony, so I wrote the story out in simple sentences and then quizzed him and the other special education students on it. They're really on junior high level. You really have to do your own lesson plan for them, at their level. In order for it to work, you really have to have a close-knit relationship between the special education and the regular teacher. She has to come to this class instead of me going to her. Time is of the essence. Scheduling is important. You have to figure the classes they are going to, Ken should be in a smaller, slower class. He is in with thirty six. Bob, he is so frustrated. I ask him if he wants to go to Marge's room and he says no. Maybe they ought to be in their own special class. They have not been laughed at. They are accepted beautifully but I'm not sure whether I should call on them or not. I'd like to see the program continue. We weren't given any help or guidelines. Being experienced, I could handle it but an inexperienced teacher ought to get some

preparation. We need explicit goals for each kid. We need a sense of what you should be shooting for.

It can be seen from these remarks, while most of the sentiment expressed is positive, teachers feel ambivalent. Mainstreaming seems to be working. They derive some satisfaction from it but they are also concerned. Not knowing how the students themselves feel is a big issue. They assume they are suffering but from my talks with the students, the suffering seems worth it to them. The discomfort may be a projection on the teachers part of the uneasiness they feel with the students who are not up to standards.

The extra work that is entailed was mentioned by everyone. As long as Marge helps out, takes the major responsibility for her students, things are okay. It is not that teachers who have her students are not willing to do extra but they do not want the responsibility of making their class work for these students. With declining budgets, the teachers in Hutton have been asked to take more students than they are accustomed to. Some have other major responsibilities in the schools, not to mention their family, out of school responsibilities and some work outside the school to supplement their incomes which they say is inadequate to support their families. They are willing to give that extra hundred yards but they don't feel they have that extra mile.

One irony that was pointed out to me has to do with what one teacher expressed as "getting punished" for being good. The idea here is that those teachers who do well, who work hard at their jobs, handled the diversity of students in a positive way, are well liked and respected, they are the ones that are always asked to do more. Those teachers who already are not doing "their share" are not asked. They get rewarded for being ineffective.

Conclusion

In most people's minds, the phrases "mainstreaming" and "disability" paint a clear picture. A child in a wheelchair, perhaps with cerebral palsy, or maybe mentally retarded, surrounded by non-disabled peers. This portrayal is deceptive. As I entered schools to start my observation, the clear concepts of "mainstreaming" and "disability" turned into mirages. They blurred when I tried to use them to order the murky world we were in.

How children are perceived, including whether they are thought of as disabled, and how they are dealt with varies from school district to school district, from school to school, and from place to place within a given school. In addition, who is considered handicapped and what specific type of handicapping conditions a student has varies over time. As the inner city young man illustrates, at one time students who were dropouts are now on the handicapped roster. In studying the records of students in the classes we observed in, we saw dramatic changes in official diagnoses.

This points to the necessity of looking at the particular situation and historical time the disability is defined in order to understand how people think about and use the concept of disability and mainstreaming in schools. We have been convinced through our research of the fruitfulness of seeing the various disability labels and mainstreaming as discretionary, yet imposing frames of mind rather than discrete conditions or practices that people engage in. They make the system of dealing with differences make sense giving order to the world. Terms like mental retardation when

approached this way are not pathological conditions, rather, they are common sense notions that emerge in interactions and become lodged in the minds of people who are given the responsibility of educating and ordering our schools.

At Hutton High like all the schools we observed in, school personnel were facing declining enrollments and budget cutbacks. These intertangled with specific struggles over school closings, reduction in programming, racial balance, teacher union negotiations, and parent activists pressing for specific reforms. There were rifts between teachers and administrators, old timers and the new guard, parents and school personnel. School personnel's acceptance or rejection of new students labeled handicapped has to be understood, at least in part, as being unrelated to the specific issue of disabled children and the concept of mainstreaming. The changes suggested by public law 94-142 can be viewed as a vehicle to play out old struggles and wage on-going battles. The receptivity of administration and teachers to the inclusion of children defined as handicapped is related to their general receptivity to change and intimately tied to conflicts and patterns of relationships that are part of the on-going school structure.

In our visits to schools we have found many people who provide explanations of why mainstreaming could and could not work. Many had no understanding of how the concept might actually be practiced and what it might look like in their own work place. In defense of an anti-mainstreaming position we heard, "Other kids will make fun of them." "Regular teachers have not been trained to teach the handicapped." "Schools are not set up to accommodate those kinds of children." "To have children who can't control their bowels in with the regular kids is too much of a burden." "Schools have enough trouble now without this

problem too." After awhile, the phrases repeated themselves and we could see how a vocabulary had developed to both defend and attack the proposed change. Some of the cliches were distortions of what was proposed and had no grounding in objective facts, others did.

What was striking was how the same objective conditions could be used on the one hand by someone as a reason not to include handicapped children and on the other hand for integration. At Hutton declining enrollment and an unfavorable racial balance was given as an explanation for taking more disabled youngsters.

In another secondary school, in the same district, the same problems were given as reasons not to have more disabled students. In fact, in one school, the principal was actively attempting to reduce the number of handicapped youngsters because he felt that they were a factor in having middle class white students transfer to private schools. There are other examples of the same objective situation being used in opposite ways. In one school the fact that typical students had never been exposed to children with severe disabilities was given as a reason for supporting integration. It would be a learning situation. For another, the fact that they had no experience meant that the handicapped would be persecuted. In another school, one teacher, who never had contact with disabled students, saw mainstreaming as a challenge, one that would help her with her mid life crisis. Another saw her lack of experience as disqualifying her from participation.

I am not suggesting that there are not objective conditions that facilitate or impede change. But what I am suggesting is that perhaps more important than the objective conditions is how people come to

think about their work in general and the vocabulary they develop to justify their actions. The study of change in school has to include a discussion of the distinction between "reasons" and "excuses". Justifications and rationalizations are developed to facilitate or impede change. These cliches have to be understood as part of the participants vocabulary of motives rather than as reasons that necessarily relate to objective conditions.

I mentioned how Marge was tongue in cheek about her students being "learning disabled". In general, we found teachers and personnel working directly with students skeptical about student's official diagnoses and the official special education system. Administrators tended to be less irreverent and took the official diagnosis and official special education explanation for placements at face value. Some of the teachers including Marge that seemed to be effective in working with students did so by manipulating the system, that is, by using its symbols, its labels, to negotiate a situation beneficial to students.

Pupils designated "disabled" under public law 94-142 guidelines, are supposed to have I.E.P.'s. I.E.P. stands for individual education plan. The teacher who is in charge of the student, with consultation of specialists such as school psychologist and speech therapist, fill out a detailed form in which the goals for the student are outlined and activities and experiences that will be provided to meet these goals. The I.E.P. for each child is approved by the Committee on the Handicapped. School personnel differ in their perspective on the meaning of I.E.P.'s. Some take them quite seriously, others see them as administrative formality. While the I.E.P. is the official plan for the student, most teachers develop what we have termed "the unofficial I.E.P.'s." That is, the teachers have

an unwritten plan about what they would like to accomplish with the student and how to go about it. In thinking through the unofficial I.E.P., teachers strongly take into consideration such private knowledge as the subjective quality of the services offered and the reputation of the people associated with them. Thus, in high schools special education students schedules are made up to purposely avoid certain teachers. There are working partnerships and trade agreements with specific teachers and programs. Elementary teachers visit and in other ways seek out insider information in looking for new placements for their older students. The official I.E.P. has no overt reference to these personal judgements and relationships that are so central to the teacher's understanding of what he or she thinks is best for a particular student. The teacher attempts to construct the official I.E.P. so as to placate all those involved so that the unofficial I.E.P. can be carried out. At times, this means diagnoses and pupil descriptions are manipulated to have the official I.E.P. align with the desired placement. Those who worked with students directly can work together in such manipulation. The Committee on the Handicapped meetings and the official I.E.P. takes on the character of what Irving Goffman calls "Front Stage".

Handicapping conditions, mainstreaming and special curriculum and services are ways of talking and thinking about things. Some use this vocabulary to negotiate situations in which children prosper and grow. At other times it is used to get rid of a problem.

Most discussions of special education are devoid of references to the larger system that programs operate in. It is as if special education programs do not operate within a school within a district and that to grasp what special education is you have to have a sense of the whole. We have found that not only is special education not mainstreamed in the discussions but that special education programs seldom exist as an integrated part of a system, in a sense they are add-ons.

With a few notable exceptions, in the schools we studied including Hutton, mainstreaming meant including children defined as handicapped in with their non handicapped peers. The children were add-ons to existing arrangements. In addition, new programs were appendages to the school system rather than being directly related to its structure and values. Criteria for successful programming included fitting into the existing arrangements and accepting the standard as a given.

No where was this more evident than at Hutton and the other high schools. Hutton honors academic achievement, the symbol of which was getting into college or for the slower students graduating or as they put it "walking across the stage". Students who did not achieve academically are marginal to the school, its failures. These high school programs were successful because they help students accumulate Carneige units and pass minimum competency based tests that were required for graduation. School personnel thought that the high school curriculum and the state testing system were irrelevant to student's needs (they were reading Silas Mariner and the Great Gatsby) but they worked with the students to get through. This involved drilling them for competeney tests and in other ways, pressing these students who did not fit into the mold enough to squeeze through.

Everything includes bending examination rules, daily rote memorization, and letting curriculum that might better prepare Pam to live in the world after high school, slide.

Another illustration of the lack of integration of special education into the total education system is the case of the administration of the programs for the handicapped. In a number of school districts, we observed confusion as to who these programs belong to and who was in charge of those children designated as disabled. Many school districts have an administrative position of director of special education but most school principals were

given autonomy over the programs in their own schools. When special education students were more self contained, in segregated programs, the director of special educations authority was clear. At present we observed struggles between special education directors and principals concerning who was in charge where no clear administrative supervision of programs. Special education specialists and regular teachers indicated that they were confused about who was responsible for specific children and the programs they were working under. Often it was clear who had responsibility for individual children, who was in charge of coordinating programs, and bringing about change within the school was an open book.

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